



CHILDREN'S BOOK
COLLECTION



LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

Gertie Rowell

$\frac{47}{100}$

Primer Ms

March 10th 1855

From Paper for being a good
girl











ELSIE WOOD.

A STORY FOR GIRLS.



Boston :

Published by D. Lothrop & Co.

Dover, N.H. : G. T. Day & Co.

1872.





ELSIE WOOD.

CHAPTER I.

Elsie Wood was a little girl of nine or ten years old, who lived in a pretty cottage on the outskirts of a large town. Elsie had a kind father and mother, and two little brothers called Georgie and Harry.

Harry was quite a baby, with a bright rosy face, soft fair hair, and tiny white plump hands. Elsie was a kind sister, and many a happy hour she spent in playing with her baby brothers; but she had one great fault, and that was a habit of procrastination.

Perhaps some of my young readers may not know what such a long word means, and so I will tell them. There is an old proverb which says, 'Never put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day,' and this explains exactly what procrastination means.

It is delaying or putting off what may or ought to be done immediately.

For instance, when her mamma told

her to do anything, Elsie was always happy and willing to do it; but she had a way of saying, 'Yes, mamma, I'll come in a minute;' and sometimes the minutes turned out to be very long ones indeed.

Her mamma had often checked her little daughter for this fault, but it is very difficult to root evil habits out of our hearts when once they take possession of them; and so little Elsie felt, for she had often tried to cure herself of her bad habit, but somehow it always got the better of her when she was in the least off her guard; and, as she said, she could not always have her eyes wide open.

The cottage in which Elsie lived was covered with woodbine and roses; and in summer-time, before the little girl was out of bed, they were looking in at the window and nodding to her, as if to say, ‘Good morning, Elsie, we are glad to see you.’

Elsie walked into the town every day to school; and if she learnt her lessons very well through the week, her mamma would give her a penny to spend when Saturday came round.

Every little boy and girl knows how easy it is to spend a penny, but I am not at all sure that every one knows what is the best use to make of it.

Even Elsie, with her good, kind

heart, never thought of it; for week after week she had spent it on apples, and cakes, and playthings of every description. They were not always for herself, for Harry and George came in for a good share of the good things; and so her mamma did not interfere with the laying out of the weekly penny, when she saw that her little daughter was so unselfish.

But at last one day Elsie stood turning her penny over and over in her hand, seemingly undecided what to do with it. It really seemed as if she had bought everything, and that there was nothing more to buy.

“I am tired of sweetmeats and

cakes ! I wonder if there is really nothing I would like," said Elsie thoughtfully.

"I know what I'd like," said Master George, who was making his rocking-horse gallop at full speed ; "I'd like a gun, and then I would be a soldier, and kill people !"

"Oh, how wicked !" said Elsie ; "I won't buy a gun."

"Oh Elsie, Elsie, not a real gun," laughed George, "only a play one ; do, Elsie, buy me a gun !"

But Elsie only shook her head, as if she were but half convinced that George did not mean to kill everybody he met with it.

“Come here, my daughter, and I will try to help you out of your puzzle,” said Mrs. Wood, who had been listening to the conversation between the children.

“If my Elsie is at all at a loss how to spend her penny, let me remind her how many poor children there are who have scarcely a bite to eat, or any clothes to keep them warm. Instead, then, of buying things that you neither need nor even wish, would it not be better to keep it for the poor?”

“Oh yes, mamma, much better,” said Elsie, her bright eyes sparkling with pleasure, “only it seems so very little to do any good with.”

“Pennies make pounds, you know,” said Mrs. Wood with a smile; “and if you lay past your Saturday penny for a few weeks, you will by and by have enough to do something.”

“Oh yes, mamma; and when grand-papa or Uncle Edward gives me a sixpence or a shilling, I will keep that too. I am so glad you have thought of such a nice plan, dear mamma!”

“Then I will tell what we shall do, my little girl, since you like the idea so much. I am going into town this afternoon, and you may come with me, and we will buy a little safety mug for you to drop your pennies into.”

Elsie was quite delighted with this

arrangement, and dressed herself eagerly for her walk. She saw many pretty things in the shop windows as she passed by, but she kept her penny firmly closed up in one little hand, quite determined that it should not be spent upon anything but a safety mug.

At last the mug was bought, and happy Elsie returned to her home, and placed it on the nursery mantelpiece, where the sight of it often made her dream of all the good deeds she was going to do with its contents some day not very far off.



CHAPTER II.

As I have told you, Elsie was by no means a selfish girl; and regularly, week after week, she dropped her penny into the little hole of her bank without the least hesitation

Three months passed without her ever failing to do this, and at the end of that time Elsie had half-a-crown in her

bank — a shilling collected from her weekly pennies, another that had been given to her on her birthday by grand-papa, and a sixpence from Uncle Edward.

Half-a-crown seemed a very large sum to little Elsie; but though it will buy many toys and pretty things for a child, it will not go very far when it comes to be laid out on the real wants of life.

Mrs. Wood had thought of this, and she had also thought of a way by which Elsie might increase her savings by a very small amount of labor on her part, — a way by which she might also be taught to overcome her evil habit of procrastination, by cultivating

perseverance and steadiness of purpose. And now you will see how Elsie's one fault interfered with her real goodness and kindness of heart.

"Elsie, dear," said her mamma one morning, "bring your work and sit down by me, while we have a little talk. I have something to say to my daughter."

"Oh yes, mamma, I will be there in a minute; only I have lost my thimble, and must look for it first."

"Lost your thimble, Elsie! What has become of the work-bag Aunt Lucy gave you last summer?"

"Oh, mamma, I left it in the nursery yesterday afternoon; and when I

finished my seam I laid down my thimble somewhere, only for a minute, till I had a game with George."

"And so the minutes grew till my little girl forgot about it?"

"Yes, mamma, just that," said Elsie, glad to find that she was so well understood.

"Just that? And can Elsie not see from this that she should never put off her little duties till another time, but do everything in its proper time and place?"

"Yes, mamma, I know it is the right way, only sometimes it is difficult to remember."

"Only difficult if we are accustomed

to the wrong way, which I fear is too much the case with my Elsie."

Elsie blushed a rosy red, for she was really ashamed of her carelessness. After a little searching and a good deal of trouble, the missing thimble was at length found; the needle, thread, and scissors were gathered together; and Elsie set herself down on a footstool to hem a pocket-handkerchief, and listen to what her mother had to say.

"I have been thinking, Elsie, of a very good way by which, with a little diligence and perseverance on your part, you might very soon increase your little stock of money, so that perhaps in a short time — say Christmas day — you

might have sufficient funds to provide a substantial dinner for poor Widow Jones' orphan children."

"Oh, delightful, mamma!" exclaimed Elsie joyfully; "but how am I ever to do that all by myself?"

"Only by patience and steadiness," said Mrs. Wood. "I propose that you should lay out your half-crown in purchasing some worsted, with which you might knit a pair of stockings for papa. It wants six weeks till Christmas now; and if you work regularly and steadily at them, you might easily have them finished in time, without tiring and hurrying yourself in the least. For this work of love I will promise to give

you five shillings, so that you would thus have a great deal more to lay out than you would otherwise have by merely saving your weekly pennies. Will my daughter be afraid of the extra trouble, or is she willing to undertake the task? ”

“ Oh, mamma, of course ; it is such a nice thought of yours ! Only think of me having five shillings to spend as I like ! ” said Elsie, her blue eyes sparkling with satisfaction. “ And what a delightful surprise little Nellie and Willie Jones will get when I take them their dinner ! ”

“ Wait a little, Elsie. I can only allow you to undertake the task on two

conditions ; and remember it will depend entirely on your own exertions whether the little Jones' have their Christmas dinner or not."

"How do you mean, mamma?" "What are the conditions?"

"First, that the stockings are all your own work ; second, that they are finished and given to me the day before Christmas. If they are not, then the orphans must do without their dinner ; for I will not give you the five shillings till your work is finished. Do those seem hard terms?"

"Oh no, mamma, not at all. I shall have finished long before that time," said Elsie confidently.

“ We shall see,” was all that her mamma answered ; for she half feared that her daughter’s besetting sin might prove a hindrance.

“ And when must I begin, mamma ? ” asked Elsie, all eagerness to show how much in earnest she was.

“ The sooner the better. We shall get the the worsted when we are out, and you may commence this very evening if you like.”

The worsted was accordingly bought with Elsie’s treasured half-crown, and the same evening saw her fairly started at her work. Six weeks seemed a very long time to the little girl ; and as she was a good knitter, she anticipated no

difficulty in the fulfilment of her undertaking.

But there are method and regularity required with every work, be it ever so small; and unless these rules be strictly attended to, the results can never be satisfactory.

For a week Elsie stuck bravely to her stocking. She set herself a certain portion for every day, and this she faithfully accomplished, and allowed nothing to come between her and this duty which she had taken in hand. Mrs. Wood watched her daughter's work growing under her nimble fingers with no small pleasure, and she really began

to think that Elsie had conquered her spirit of procrastination.

But, alas, it was the old story of the hare in the fable over again. At the end of a week, when Elsie saw how well she had worked, and how much she had accomplished, she began to think there was no necessity for being so very diligent: for if she chanced to do a little less than usual, or even to miss a day altogether, it would not much matter; for she knitted so quickly, she could easily make up for it another time.

Thus reasoned Elsie at the end of the first week. It was not that she had grown tired of her work, or that she

was beginning to regret that she had taken it in hand; it was only that her bad habit was not yet conquered. And now that the novelty of her work was wearing off, it began to show itself as usual.

Elsie was still determined to keep her promise, and have the stockings finished by the appointed time; only she had still five long weeks before her, and what was the use of hurrying?

And so now the work was often laid aside till a more convenient season, and sometimes forgotten altogether; for a whole day would frequently pass without it ever being touched.



CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Wood observed this change in Elsie; and though she was grieved at it, she resolved to take no notice of it. The child must learn to do her duty of her own accord, and because it was her duty; not because she was told to do it, or reminded of it.

Thus week after week slipped past,





and still Elsie's work lagged behind. Mrs. Wood knew now how it would all end, but she uttered neither a word of advice nor reproach. Elsie knew the conditions, and had promised to fulfil them, and she must be taught to rely on her own strength of purpose.

“It is only a week till Christmas day now,” remarked Mr. Wood at the breakfast table one morning. “We must be thinking what good things we need, to make it a merry time for all.”

Elsie gave a little start, for she remembered Nellie and Willie Jones, and the dinner she was to give them. Was it really time the things were being bought already, and she with only one

stocking finished, and a little bit of its neighbor begun?"

What was to be done? "Oh, I shall have lots of time, after all," thought Elsie comfortably; "for the holidays begin in two days, and then I shall have nothing to do."

But there was a great difference between five weeks and one, as Elsie soon found out, especially when that one belonged to the Christmas holidays, when there were so many other things to be done — shopping, sight-seeing, and merry games — such as one has at no other time of the year.

No one enjoyed fun and frolic more than Elsie, and she could not sit quietly

at her knitting while papa was romping with her brothers and mamma was playing merry tunes on the piano, which almost made her feet dance, in spite of her efforts to keep them still. And yet it was a terribly painful thought to kind-hearted Elsie to think that poor Nellie and Willie Jones must go without their Christmas dinner, all on account of her careless habit of delay ; and, perhaps worst of all, for her kind mamma to see that she could not keep her promise, nor fulfil a work that had been made so easy for her.

Elsie was really beginning to despair now ; and over and over again came the vain wish that she had kept a work for

every day, and every day for its work.

Christmas fell on a Wednesday; and on the previous Monday Elsie's papa proposed at luncheon that the children should have a treat that afternoon.

At other times Elsie would have been the first to hail such a proposal with delight, but now she sat thoughtful and silent.

“What's wrong with our bright Elsie?” asked her papa presently. “Is she too old now to play with her papa and the boys?”

Elsie smiled faintly, but she could not utter a word, her heart was so full of sorrow and pain. The great hot tears were standing in her eyes, and she

hurried from the room as quickly as she could to hide them.

Mrs. Wood perfectly understood what was troubling her daughter. She knew that there was a great struggle going on in the young heart between duty and inclination. There could be no doubt but what Elsie would like to join the proposed excursion for the afternoon; but if there was to be the least hope of the task being fulfilled — of Nellie and Willie Jones having their Christmas dinner — she must lay aside all thoughts of it. Even then there was but a faint possibility of it being completed.

Mrs. Wood rose from the table, and followed Elsie to the nursery, where she

was seated in a dark corner, all alone. The ill-fated work lay in her lap, and the tears came dropping through the closed fingers on to it, one by one.

“Elsie, Elsie, my child, what is all this?” asked the mother’s gentle voice.

“Oh, dear mamma, you know all about it. Poor, poor Nellie and Willie! What will become of them now?”

“And poor little Elsie Wood! What is to become of her, do you think, if she cannot conquer her evil habits?”

“Oh, I don’t know!” sobbed Elsie. “I thought I had so much time, and now it is nearly gone, and my work is not finished. How sorry I am for the little orphans!”

“ My poor Elsie,” said the mother, clasping her child to her heart, “ you have punished yourself a great deal more than them ; for they were quite ignorant of your intentions, and so cannot be vexed at your not being able to fulfil them. No, Elsie, my child, you have all the disappointment to bear alone ; and besides, you have the painful knowledge that you have allowed your idle habits to conquer your better nature, and that is worst of all.”

“ But, mamma, I did so wish to give little Nellie and Willie their Christmas dinner. May I not do it even yet, do you think, mamma? Would one day longer for the stockings make any dif-

ference to you?" asked Elsie, looking entreatingly into her mother's face.

"You remember the conditions, Elsie. I cannot alter them now, on any account," said her mother gently, almost sadly; for she would fain have wiped away her little daughter's tears, and brought the happy smile back to her face.

But it was greater love to let the child suffer now, than that she should grow up with her faults clinging to her, and increasing in intensity as the years rolled on.

Mrs. Wood felt it would be foolish and unjust of her to do away with the two conditions she had at first insisted

upon, just because Elsie had not fulfilled her part of the bargain; and so she wisely resolved that Elsie must take the consequences of her carelessness. The lesson might be a bitter one, but it might also prove to be one of priceless value.





CHAPTER IV..

When Elsie saw that her mamma's mind was firmly made up on this point, she resolved that she must make one mighty and final effort to attain the wished-for end, by finishing her task if possible.

She looked at the stocking, which was yet scarcely half finished, and then out



on the crisp white snow, on which the afternoon sun was playing, and tinging it with golden and crimson streaks. It would be a great sacrifice to give up her walk, and sit alone in the house with her work ; and yet it must be done, Elsie said to herself, and so she begged to be allowed to stay at home.

Mrs. Wood felt it was perfectly hopeless now to expect it to be finished in time, and for this reason might have showed Elsie that it was useless to deny herself this pleasure at so late an hour ; but she allowed her little girl to do just as she pleased in regard to this, for it was part of the punishment she had

prepared for herself by her neglect of duty.

And so Elsie stayed at home by herself. When she saw her mamma and papa go out, with George dancing gaily at their side, and Harry following closely behind, hold of nurse's hand, she could not help feeling more deeply than ever how foolish she had been to let the shining hours slip quickly past without making the most of them. But for this neglect, she too might have been one of the happy group.

Naturally enough, those were some of the thoughts that came to Elsie, as she sat there alone, though she was working busily all the while.

But, alas! nimble as her fingers were, the night passed, and the appointed day arrived, and found the task unfinished. Poor Elsie would have invoked the assistance of all the fairies and brownies that had ever visited this dull earth, if she had only known where to find them; but the inhabitants of elf-land had as yet only figured before her in story-books, and there was no use wishing for impossibilities.

But we will see presently that there was somebody a great deal more substantial than a fairy who had been thinking of the little girl, and wondering how he could lift the shadow from off her heart, without interfering in any way

with the self-imposed duty which had proved such a failure; and this was no less a personage than her kind silver-haired grandpapa.

It was grandpapa's custom to give each of his little grandchildren a gift of some kind at Christmas-time; and hearing of Elsie's trouble, and how she grieved over the fault that caused it, as well as the dissatisfaction that had resulted from it, he resolved to help her to gratify her wish in gladdening the orphan's poor home, though this too must be done at the sacrifice of her own gratification.

But Elsie would not mind that, grandpapa thought, if she was really sorry for

her conduct. And he was right: she would freely have given up all her little treasures if she could only have recalled the past six weeks; but that was impossible — they were past and gone, never more to return.

The cottage tea-table was a picture of comfort that Christmas eve, with the warm light resting on each face of the happy group. Elsie was the only one who had a cloud on her brow, for the shadow was not yet lifted from the young heart.

Presently a loud peal of the doorbell sounded through the house, and in a few minutes the servant entered, bear-

ing a tray well laden with parcels of every size and description.

One of them was addressed to Master George, another to Harry; and there were several others, both large and small, all for Elsie. Who could they be from? It was very strange!

But it was a great deal more strange, when mamma cut the twine of the largest and heaviest, and opened paper after paper, to find a great piece of beef displayed to view!

What a very funny Christmas gift to give to any little girl! and yet, perhaps, it was the thing of all others that little Elsie Wood was most wishing for at present. Besides this, there

was a packet of currants and raisins, another of sugar, and another of tea.

Poor bewildered Elsie looked at them over and over again as if she were in a dream, and then at her papa and mamma, to see if they could throw any light on the mysterious packages; but they could only guess from whence they had come. At length Mrs. Wood discovered a card beneath one of the papers, and this is what was written on it:

“To Elsie, with her grandpapa’s love, and hoping that she may have a merry Christmas, by learning to deny herself for the sake of giving others pleasure.”

“What does that mean, mamma?”

asked Elsie, with a look of wonder in her happy eyes, when Mrs. Wood had read it aloud. "How is this denying myself?"

"Do you know for whom those good things are intended?"

"For Nellie and Willie Jones, mamma, I think. It is their Christmas dinner."

"Yes, you are right. George and Harry each got pretty presents; but instead of sending you something for yourself, grandpapa has thought it better to let you carry out your good intentions by another sacrifice. Is it too great a one, Elsie — is it paying too dearly for your fault?"

“ Oh no, dear mamma, it was so very nice of grandpapa to think of it ! I am quite happy now ! ” And Elsie really looked it.

Next morning, Elsie had the happiness of helping to carry some of the good things to the orphan's home ; and when she saw the glad look come to the children's eyes, she felt she was fully repaid for all her sacrifices.

From there the little girl went to throw her soft arms round her grandpapa's neck, and thank him for his kind help.

But for him, she would have been a miserable, wretched little girl this Christmas, smarting with regret and disappoint-

ment. Now that she had suffered sufficiently for her grievous habit, and saw that it led to so much unhappiness, she could resolve with firm determination to conquer it.

“I would have my Elsie begin the new year with good resolutions,” said Mrs. Wood when the Christmas week was drawing to an end. “Every year that rolls on should find us better than the last. Is this the case with my little daughter?”

Elsie thought not, after what had happened so lately: she could not be good so long as that one evil habit had such dominion over her.

“Then I will tell you what we must

do: we shall write out two very simple rules for your everyday life; and if you read them over morning and evening carefully and attentively, I think you will soon learn to conquer this fault."

"I will be very careful, mamma," said Elsie earnestly. "What are they?"

"First, to have a time and place for everything; and second, to do everything in its proper time, and to keep everything in its proper place. If you read this over to yourself in the morning, it will remind you of your duty; and if you read it over at night, before you go to bed, it will show you if you have fulfilled your duty. By

the help of those simple rules, I think my Elsie might very soon be a good little girl."

Elsie thought it was worth trying for; and as she conscientiously attended to the rules her mamma had laid down for her, she very soon learned habits of order and regularity. She is now a young lady, but she has not forgotten the hard lesson which taught her the truth of the proverb, "Procrastination is the thief of time."







“FORGIVEN.”

CHAPTER I.

“ No, I will never forgive her, never ! ”

It was early still ; there was no lamp or candle in the room, and the evening sun was lying in golden wedges over the white boards of the cottage floor, and the white quilt upon the bed. The

window was open, and there were children's voices calling up from the white strand; but Elinor Franklyn was not going out to play with them to-night. She was undressing herself with swift, impatient fingers. She was going straight away to bed, her heart dark with unconquered passion, her eyes blinded with hot tears.

She could not pray. No. She bent the knee from long habit, it is true, and leaned her hot head one moment against her hands, but it was only to ask God to take care of Dick, and to make him well. The prayer had ended in a great sob here. She could not say "Our Father." She could not ask Him to

forgive as she forgave those who had trespassed against her. Oh, no ! oh, no ! she dared not come into God's presence with a lie. He knew that she did not forgive, that she could never forgive Alice — never, never ; and He would not hold her guiltless for taking His name in vain.

It was better not to pray — never to take those holy words into her lips again ; and so Elinor sprang from her knees, instead of wrestling like Jacob there, and flung herself, for the first time in her young life, upon a prayerless bed, without the blessing which could alone have brought her peace.

It was over now, the three months of

loneliness and wretchedness in a strange house, the passion, and punishment, and disgrace; and the hot tears escaped from Elinor's tired eyes as she laid her head down on the home-pillow at last.

Why did the children laugh so gladly out there Why did the sun shine so blindingly in upon the white bed? Why did not the darkness come? Why was not everything as black and miserable as her own heart to-night?

It was nearly a year now since her father and mother had gone away to Canada, leaving her and her little brother Dick behind, until they should have made a home for them in the new land.

But it seemed to Elinor to-night like

ten years. And yet how plainly she remembered her mother's last words as they stood on the deck that day, just as the bell was sounding, and Aunt Ruth was unlocking her tight fingers from round mother's neck : —

“Be a good girl, Nellie ; take care of Dick, and help him to be good ; and some day we shall all meet again, if it is God's will.”





CHAPTER II.

And Nellie had tried to be brave, and Aunt Ruth's love and tenderness had made the first six months pass almost pleasantly away. There had been long happy evenings, after Dickie was in bed, when she and Aunt Ruth had sat together at work in the open window overlooking the quiet bay, with its white

sand creeping up to the cottage gardens, with their sunflowers and hollyhocks in blow.

And there had been great games of play with Dickie on the white sand and amongst the brown seaweed rocks; and she had tried to take care of Dick, and to teach him to love God.

He had said his prayers at her knee every morning and evening since mother went until to-night. She had sung mother's hymns to him, and talked to him about her father, so that he might not forget; and she had told him about the bright new farm-house in Canada, and the sheepfolds round it, until she had taught him to share her hope of

crossing the blue sea some day to join mother there.

But in this calm, happy life, there had been little to try Elinor's real strength, nothing to make her feel her own great weakness, and drive her for help to God; and the hour trial came.

The last three months had been spent at Maitlands, her Aunt Kitty's home, some twelve miles away, and here everything had been changed!—oh! so changed. Aunt Kitty was always busy, Uncle Martin was always out, and Alice, their little girl, who was much petted and spoiled, had many ways of making Elinor feel herself quite a stranger there.

Alice had hated her from the first. So Elinor thought, in the bitterness of her heart to-night, as she went wearily over in her mind, each step of those three long months.

She had hated her because of the little papered room, with its bright chintz, which she had had to give up to her and Dickie when they came; because of the place they took in the home where she had been the only child before; because of the place Elinor took in the village school, where she had been first; and because of the many friends Elinor, with her pleasant face and bright, winning ways, had made there.

And for all these things Alice had

punished her by cruel taunts, which smarted in Elinor's lonely heart long after they were spoken — by stories unjustly told, into which Aunt Kitty had not time to inquire, and which Uncle Martin always threatened to report in his next letter to Canada.

And still Elinor had tried to be brave, and had believed herself very strong, until Alice had begun, with bribes of Crofton apples and sugarstick, to try and wean little Dick's heart away from her, and to teach him to say and do many things which Elinor, faithful to her mother's last words, could not allow.

And here Elinor had broken down; this was more than she could bear.

That very morning Uncle Martin had come in unexpectedly to finish his letter for the Canada mail, and to see little Dick, who was ill in bed, and he had found her with a hot, angry face, and defiant eyes, barring the entrance of her room against Alice, who was trying to force her way in with a still deeper flush of anger in her cheek, and her apron full of red fruit.

“No, you shall not come in! I say you shall not come in! You shall never come near Dick again!” Elinor cried, ignorant of her uncle’s approach; and her flashing eyes and angry words seemed to confirm all the stories that Uncle Martin had heard of her, and to

strengthen him in his determination to send her away.

“A nice nurse you are for your sick brother! A nice account I shall have to write of you to your parents to-day!” he said, pushing her somewhat roughly forward into the room, where poor little Dick was kneeling up in bed, his cheeks red, and his little white shirt stained with the juice of currants and strawberries.

“See what you have done,” Uncle Martin said, pointing to him.

“I will have an end of this at once. You shall not stay another hour in the house. You shall go back to your Aunt Ruth this very day!”

Elinor clung to Dick's bed, and tried to speak, but passion had made her voice weak, and Uncle Martin refused to listen to another word from her.

Aunt Kitty was out, and Alice had her own story, which she told with a meek, injured face, clinging to her father's arm, of how she had come several times to sit with Dickie, and to bring him fruit, but that Elinor had driven her each time with angry words away.

Uncle Martin did not know that the flush on Dickie's face, and the terror in his eyes, was the excitement from stories of mice behind the walls, and robbers in the woodstack, with which Alice had fanned his fever to a flame; he did

not know that Aunt Kitty had forbidden him, and Elinor had refused him, with tears, the fruit for which his hot lips craved, and which Alice still thrust upon him; and so the letter was written, sealed, and stamped in Elinor's presence, and carried by Alice to the post, whilst the gig was ordered to the door, and Elinor was driven away by the farm-servant, in punishment and disgrace, from her uncle's home and from Dick—from the little brother of whom she had promised to take care.

And now, oh now, this was the bitter thought which came again and again with a hot gush of tears, and made Elinor drive her head further down into

the pillow, and clench her hands tightly in the white quilt.

Now mother would think that she had not tried; that she had been bad, and wicked, and passionate, and had taught Dickie to be bad too; and father would believe it. They must get Uncle Martin's letter soon — nothing could stop it now — and what would they think of their little girl then?

Nellie sprang up again in bed. She could not sleep with those wild thoughts coursing like dark clouds across her brain.



CHAPTER III.

“No, I will never forgive her — never, never!” She did not know that Aunt Ruth heard these last bitter words as she stole quietly into the room, hoping to find the tired child asleep.

“Nellie, Nellie dear! don’t say that; don’t think it even in your heart,” Aunt

Ruth said, as she leaned with clasped hands over the child's bed.

“God knows how hard it is for you to-night, but He will help you. ‘Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.’ Oh, Nellie, could you not do it for Him who laid down His life for you, who suffered and forgave so much? Think of this, Nellie, and put that other thought out of your heart to-night; straight out, child, or it will grow into a fire that will burn your life away.”

Elinor turned her face away from Aunt Ruth's troubled eyes, and stared instead at the swelling roses, painted in

brilliant patterns of blue and red upon the cottage wall.

“ Even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Aunt Ruth’s voice made her own words jar like broken bells upon her ear. There was a power in those sad eyes which had never failed to conquer her proud heart before, and Elinor wished that Aunt Ruth would go away, for she did not want to forgive; she could not put the thought of all her wrong and misery out of her heart to-night; she could never forgive Alice again — no, never!

She knew that Aunt Ruth was kneeling now in the sunlight beside her bed,

but she did not choose to listen to the prayer, which she had felt had power in it too; and so she buried her head down in the pillow again, drew the clothes up, and shut it all out—the light, and the children's laughter, and the prayer.

And after a time Aunt Ruth rose, and went down stairs; but the kiss which she left upon Elinor's brow burned there long after she was gone, and the blessing whispered in her ear was remembered long after the bitterness of that night had passed away.

Poor Elinor! no wonder that she did not sleep; no wonder that she sprang up again and again, like poor Dickie, through the night, stretching blindly





out into the darkness for a comfort that was gone ; no wonder that she rose next morning with heavy leaden eyes ; for the hard unchastened spirit was in her heart still, forbidding her to forgive, forbidding her to listen to Aunt Ruth's loving counsel or advice, forbidding her to open her heart even to her, lest a spirit of more " perfect charity " should enter in.

In the strength of this same iron spirit Elinor went back to school and to the old life that day — to school, where teacher and children wondered at her dark mood and hasty words ; and to the old life, that was so changed with-

out Dick, without happiness, without hope.

And through all this, and the loneliness of the next few days, which Elinor knew were bringing that great ship with its cruel message nearer and nearer to her mother's heart, she tried to believe that she did not care; that every one was in the wrong except her — even Aunt Ruth, who told her that, no matter how much Alice had wronged her, God required her for Christ's sake to forgive; and she would not forgive — no, not even when she heard that Dickie was quite well again, and calling for her to come back — not even when she heard that Uncle Martin and Aunt

Kitty were willing to receive her if she was sorry for the past, and ready to begin a new life with them.

Sorry for the past indeed! Elinor laughed and sang through the house that day, wishing her song might reach to Aunt Kitty if it could, or prove to Alice how little sorrow she felt; but if Aunt Ruth had stopped her on the stairs that day, and asked her why she sang, the poor child's voice would have broken down in tears.

But there came an evening in Elinor's life when she did care — when she did sorrow for the past — when she sat out on the garden bench, keeping her holiday alone, looking out with parched eyes

over the sun-lit sea, wondering at the rich bloom over hill and crag, and at the glad sounds on every side of her.

This was the day — it had come at last — when father and mother must know all — when the cruel letter would come, bringing pain and disappointment to the hearts that she loved best. How would they look? what would they say? Would they ever write to her again?

“Nellie, Nellie!” a child’s voice rang over the garden gate. A child’s step came running down the garden walk, scattering the bright pebbles in its path, scattering Nellie’s sad thoughts to the wind.

It was Dickie, and great tears brimm-

ed over Elinor's eyes as she sprang forward and gathered the child up in her arms, whilst his hands closed tightly round her neck.

“Nellie, Nellie, do you know? I have come home. Alice is very sick. Aunt Kitty says that she will die, and so I have come home.”

“Aunt Kitty says that she will die!” How strangely the child's voice pealed out in the summer air; how the words struck and boomed against Elinor's heart, as it sank down, hopelessly down, into a great despair.

Uncle Martin would not see her; but Aunt Ruth came out after a time, and found her standing there with blanched

cheek and a dumb terror in her eyes, whilst Dickie played shyly with the bright pebbles at her feet.

“Elinor!” her aunt said, “I must go with your uncle at once. Alice is very ill — dying, I am afraid. She fell out of the swing this morning, and has not spoken since. Here are the keys. You must stay and take care of Dickie until I return.”

“God help you, my poor child,” she said, as she turned back a few steps, and saw Elinor still standing there, white and trembling, silent with suffering. “God help you! it is a hard day for you.”

And then she was gone, and Elinor

stood there, twisting the ring of the great house keys round and round her thumb, counting the bright poppy heads which Dickie had plucked off to plant in his little gravel garden at her feet.

“Look, Nellie, are they not pretty?” he said. “They are all growing there, you know.”

And then Dickie, tired of waiting for the smile and the answer that did not come, ran off to greet his old friend Rogers, the gardener, who came up the walk just then, and who was pleased to carry off the little fellow with him to the hay-field.

And then, for the first time, Elinor stirred, and walked on, straight on,

with bent eyes and uneven tread, down the central garden path, by which Rogers had come; through the white wicket at the end of this path, over the bridge, across the mountain stream, and out into the pathless stretch of heath and fern, to the great cliffs which overhung the sea.

Where was she going? What was she thinking of? What was she to do? Elinor scarcely knew. She felt just driven on by some great fear, some sudden storm, which had swept over her life, ruffling the whole spirit of her self-content.



CHAPTER IV.

Alice was dying, dead perhaps now, and she had not forgiven her. She had said she would not forgive her, and God had heard, and taken her at her bitter word; and now, now it was too late, and she might never forgive her again! never! never!

Was it too late? Could she forgive

her even now? Elinor stopped and plucked at the tall reed grass growing by her side until it tore her hand. Could she forgive now, to-day, when the wrong and mischief which Alice had done was bringing sorrow and dissatisfaction to the dear hearts so far away; today, when her own heart was aching with a great pain?

Elinor paused, and then, as if in answer, there stole into her heart words which her mother's voice had made dear to her, bringing the thought of Another's suffering and His pain, and of that

“ Green hill far away
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.”

What was her suffering compared with His? And yet He had forgiven His enemies, and prayed for them, leaving her this example, that she should follow in His steps; and she had refused to forgive Alice, even for His sake!

Elinor shuddered. The sun was going down in haste into the west. How many suns had already set upon her wrath? What had she done? Why had she not listened to Aunt Ruth's words on that first, sad night? — "Be ye kind one to another; tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Why had she not forgiven then?

There were great red clouds hurrying

across the sky. Were they the chariots of fire to fetch Alice home? Was it too late? Were not the gates of heaven open still? Would not God listen to her cry?

Elinor flung herself down knee deep into the great fern, her fingers twisted in the heather twigs; and there, under God's heaven — the struggle known only to Him — Alice was forgiven.

Yes, Elinor knew that she had forgiven Alice now by the rending of the dark veil which had hung for the last ten days between her own heart and God; by the earnest prayer to be herself forgiven, which had not gone up since then; by the sudden springing

back of her whole soul, like a bow unbent, to God.

Elinor knelt there until the red sun had dipped behind the dark purple waters, and the red clouds faded in the east, asking forgiveness, now not for Alice, but for herself; forgiveness for the past, in which she now saw how much she had been to blame, help for the present, in which she felt so weak; and courage for the future, in which she prayed, that if it were possible, Alice might yet live.

“Even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them who bring the good tidings! How welcome these

words sounded in Elinor's ear now as she rose and turned back towards the garden, meeting little Dick half-way, with his hand full of bright corn-flowers for her.

He had his smock full of baby corn-crakes, rescued from the mower's scythe too; and she went with him all the way to the fowl yard on the hill to put them under old Mrs. Betty, the good mother hen, and then off to the hay field again to see the wasp's nest, hanging like a silver bell down from the hazel tree.

And then they came home; and tired after his long day and quick drive through the open air, Dickie was soon

glad to kneel beside her again to say his evening prayer.

“ Say them for me, Nellie,” he said ;
“ I am tired.”

And Elinor took his clasped hands between her own, and with her head resting against his soft hair, she asked God to bless father, and mother, and every one to-night, and to make Alice well ; and then she said aloud with him the words which she dared not have breathed last night —

“ Our Father, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

“ Oh, Dickie, Dickie ! ” she said, as she leaned over his bed for the last kiss

that night, “never, never, when you grow up to be a man, or even now when you are a little boy, never lie down at night with an angry thought in your mind against any one, no matter what they have done — because, because you know God has forgiven us for Christ’s sake, and, besides, they might die or go away, and you might never see them again; and then — oh, Dickie, you do not know how wicked I have been.”

Dickie did not think that Elinor had been at all wicked. He thought that she had been very good to him to-day, and he was not angry with any one to-night. He did not understand what Elinor meant; but he was too tired and

sleepy to think about it now, and, with his arms still up round her neck, he was soon asleep.





CHAPTER V.

Next day Aunt Ruth came home with glad news for Elinor. Alice was better ; she had rallied from the first danger of her fall, and though she was still very ill, the doctor held out good hopes of her recovery. This was more than Elinor had hoped ; and Aunt Ruth was met by a look which surprised her in that

face which had been gloomy and unloving for so long — a look which told her of a fight well fought under no mortal eye — of a victory won without sword or spear — of a joy in which no stranger could intermeddle, and no man take away.

This joy helped to keep Elinor's heart at rest during the next ten days of feverish hope and fear for Alice, and for the letter from Canada, which she longed and yet dreaded to receive.

But each day the account of Alice was more hopeful than the last, and the letter, when it did come, was so full of love, that the reproof in it did not seem half as much as she had really deserved,

and the forgiveness was so complete that it broke Elinor wholly down ; and for the first time in these last days she threw herself upon Aunt Ruth's neck and cried.

And then there came another evening in Elinor's life, when she sat on the garden bench, looking out over the great sea, and the gig from Maitlands drove up once more to the door ; but this time Uncle Martin came out himself to look for her, to tell her that Alice was much better — that she was very sorry for all that had happened, and that she had herself sent him to ask Elinor to come to see her.

How willingly Elinor set out ! Uncle Martin did not say much, but she knew

by the tears in his stern eyes, as he fastened Aunt Kitty's warm shawl about her neck, by the gentleness with which he lifted her in his arms into the gig, that Uncle Martin had suffered in these last days himself, and that he knew all now.

"I wrote to your mother by last mail, Nellie," he said, as they drove up to the door of his house, and he lifted her down.

"I told her that I had been very hard upon you, and that he had to forgive an old man for his hasty temper, and not her own little girl."

Elinor looked up with a bright glance which told Uncle Martin that he need say

no more ; and then she went in, and the two cousins met after those long weeks in which they had both learned so much. Alice read in Elinor's full eyes the assurance of that forgiveness which, in the softened days of pain and weakness, she had longed to hear, and Elinor felt her whole heart open in sudden love and pity to the little frail figure lying on the bed. In that first moment she could not speak. She could only kneel there, with her arms round her cousin, and thank God for the power of proving how completely even the memory of the past was blotted out.

It was long before Alice recovered the health which she had so suddenly lost.





Days crept on into months, and months increased to years, and still she was weak and dependant upon others, and still Elinor was at her post.

Already Dick and Aunt Ruth had answered the summons to Canada, but Elinor turned herself resolutely away from the dream of sheep fields and white farms — from the longing after a mother's voice and touch. Maitlands was her home now; Alice wanted her, and she would finish the task which God had given her to do.

But there did come a time when Alice no longer required the tender care and watchfulness which Elinor had so long and freely given.

There came a summer bringing back vigor and strength to her, bringing an hour of great gladness to Elinor's heart too, when, after a long voyage, she stood on the threshold of her new home in Canada, the white walls overgrown with creepers and wild fruit now — when she found the home circle unbroken there — when a mother's voice welcomed her, and a father's hand led her in.













